



Africana Womanism As a Vehicle of Women Empowerment and Influence

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and analyses Africana womanism presented by Clenora Hudson-Weems. Africana Womanism is an authentic theoretical concept designed for all women of African descent. It is family centered, rather than female centered, and advocates race empowerment, rather than female empowerment. It, then, appropriately prioritizes race, class and gender, as Black men and women have the ultimate responsibility of securing family survival and thus, cannot afford the luxury of gender exclusivity when the whole race is at risk. Africana womanism is a term coined in the late 1980s by Clenora Hudson-Weems intended as an ideology applicable to all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and Afrocentrism and focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women of the African diaspora. It distinguishes itself from feminism, or Alice Walker's womanism. Africana womanism pays more attention to and focuses more on the realities and the injustices in society in regard to race. African men and women do not accept the ideology of feminism. Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as white men have had to oppress white women. Africana womanist ideology contributes to Afrocentric discourse. Africana womanism fundamental foundation is built on traditional Africana philosophy and values and on Afrocentric theories: Some of the traditional values forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth. All this will be discussed in detail in the paper.

Keywords: Africana Womanism, Black feminism, Afro centism, African descent

Empowerment may be defined in several ways, including accepting women's viewpoints or making an effort to seek them, raising the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in a particular political or social context. Rahman et al. said that empowering women "puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making. Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity are the result of cultural norms. While many women are aware issues posed by gender inequality, others have become accustomed to it. Many men in power are hesitant to disrupt societal norms that are unfair to women.

Africana womanism is a term coined in the late 1980s by Clenora Hudson-Weems intended as an ideology applicable to all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and Afrocentrism and focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women of the African diaspora. It distinguishes itself from feminism, or Alice Walker's womanism. Africana womanism pays more attention to and focuses more on

the realities and the injustices in society in regard to race. Hudson-Weems sought to create an ideology specific to African women and women of African descent. Hudson-Weems believes that the creation of the ideology separates African women's accomplishments from African male scholars, feminism, and Black feminism. Hudson-Weems argues that "Africana womanism is not an addendum to feminism, Black feminism, African feminism, or Alice Walker's womanism" Feminism and gender issues are separate entities that are not reliant upon each other, and therefore, Africana women are able to address gender issues without partaking in feminist activity.

Africana Womanism Society lists 18 characteristics 18 key components that form Africana womanism. The characteristics are the following: Self-Naming, Self-Definition, Family-Centeredness, Wholeness, Role Flexibility, Adaptability, Authenticity, Black Female Sisterhood, Struggling with males against oppression, Male Compatibility, Recognition, Ambition, Nurturing, Strengthen, Respect, Respect for Elders, Mothering, and Spirituality. African men and women do not accept the ideology of feminism. There is a general consensus in the Africana community that the feminist movement, by and large, is the white woman's movement for two reasons. First, the Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as white men have had to oppress white women. Africana womanism contrasts a racist and sexist feminist/womanist ideology, and many Africana women (and men) have come to embrace it. Africana womanist ideology contributes to Afrocentric discourse. Africana womanism fundamental foundation is built on traditional Africana philosophy and values and on Afrocentric theories: Some of the traditional values forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth.

The first principle Self-Naming discusses the importance of self-identifying as an African woman in society. The Africana identification is distinguishable from feminism and Black variants. Self-naming is the period of recognizing the need for an Africana movement with its own name. The second principle defined, Self-Definition, begins to describe realities that African women face, through a Pan-African lens. The Pan-African movement attempts to create a sense of brotherhood among all people of African descent, regardless of whether or not they live on the continent of Africa. Self-definition explores gender inequalities and stereotypes in the modern patriarchy. Self-naming and self-definition are the first two couple of characteristics of Africana womanism. The term "nommo" is given to the idea of self-naming, which is important because in order for one to exist it has to be given a correct name. There is an increasing need for self-naming, self-defining, and self-identity for Black people and self-defining helps to discover one's identity through their own point of view of their world that goes against that of the dominant culture.

The second groupings of characteristics are family-centeredness, wholeness, authenticity, role flexibility, adaptability, struggling with Black men against oppression, and Black female sisterhood. The second grouping of characteristics includes Family-Centeredness, Wholeness, Authenticity, Role Flexibility, Adaptability, In Concert With Men, and Genuine Sisterhood. The principle of family-centeredness focuses on the entire black family unit. The interest in the success of the black community as a whole maintains a sense of wholeness. Any important outcomes are shared as overarching closeness of the Black community is enforced by the women in society. The third and last clustering of characteristics are strength, male compatibility, respect, recognition, respect for elders, ambition, mothering, nurturing, and spirituality. Historically, Black women were always had psychological and physical strengthen especially with what happened with [slavery](#) Hudson-Weems says that Black men's and Black women's bond helps to maintain the race. Black woman are physically and mentally strong. This principle of Strength is often the one that is attacked by non-Africana oppressors because their goal is to force submission upon the powerful group that is Africana women. Hudson-Weems says that Black men's and Black women's bond helps to maintain the race. Therefore, the principle of male compatibility is based upon mutually beneficial relationships between a well-respected African woman and a supportive, like-minded, man.

Respect and recognition go together that is necessary for a healthy respect for Africana womanists, and it helps them relate to others. Respect and recognition also contribute to the self-love and admiration and to the respect for elders or older members in the Black community. To dissect both principles a bit further, respect refers to reverence an African woman has for herself, absent of the colonized standards. Determining one's worth, while ignoring politics, is crucial to becoming a confident African woman. The pillar of Recognition refers to the acknowledgement of humanity, capability, and power of Black women. Recognition plays a large role in keeping communal peace and ensuring the Black women's effectiveness in the struggle for equality. The principles that outline the caring nature of the Africana womanist are defined below. Respect for Elders, is an extension of the historical African tradition of ancestral reverence. Ancestral reverence is the habitual act of caring for elders, and eventual ancestors, within a community or society. Once the elders become ancestors, they will be responsible for providing wisdom and guidance which is highly vaunted. The Nurturer and Motherer are both described a call for all community members to play an active role in the rearing of the community and

propaganda of the race through care. It is an African woman's duty to not only care and nourish her family, but to provide the care and nourishment for her race as a whole. By fostering and guiding fellow women, the Africana Movement is advanced. The initiative taken to further the public's appreciation and education about the Africana Movement exemplifies the principle of Ambition.

The final principle is Spirituality, which stresses the importance of the reverence for traditional African spiritual systems. These spiritual systems call for a collection of the principles including Ancestral Reverence, Oneness with oneself, and with nature as well. Africana womanist are also very spiritual and believe in a higher power and their mothering and nurturing is tradition.

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